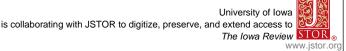
The Ocean Forests: an elegy and lament

As the gleam of growth stills in harsh, cold sunlight, and trees tap inner heat through fibre-optics, it starts to filter through here-an earthquake miles below the ocean's floor, plate slipping under plate, the massive release of energy and surge of water running the gradient of landfall: forcing entry, as deftly as fire, an elemental crossover on the edge of all that's living, or catching sight of where play or a conversation rolls in the swell uprooting the tree as body, as water is the body we are, and when water pulls back the soul escapes; what do we see in the whitewash, the island wreckage, the passing urge to push out from the point of our disruption? Calibrating prophecies of the living, some look for signs of punishment-there are none, and those who want such outcomes condemn us before we wake--animals moved to higher ground.



Truth annuls our own disasters: a local freeze or heatwave, the light of the ocean forest absorbed by warmer currents, ice encasing an entire depth at once pushed and drawn out, swept with a rush to reshape, supplant; this melding, curving, heaving re-alignment... the fulsome atmosphere imprinted with cloud, the seaweeds of new oceans. new shorelines, haphazard burials, an air pocket in a basement as light and air saturate wishful thinking, a choice we make in a medium of earth, water, air-no country declares ownership in the bloom of hot coral forests, ice forests and memories of mimosa from the driest parts. We reflect from where we are, where we were. The melting and piercing of the earth's crustmade viscous then fragile then unstable? We search for answers. We watch sunsets with iridological intensity, an emollition of the planet's static, a mirror stripped of its backing we stare up at the swimming, the molten, the chilled, the drowning. Cold and calculating: rupture, megathrust... absolving the apocalypse? Language betrays disaster, and makes culture of the brutal fact: tsunami. Twenty years ago on the northern tip of Sumatra, we reflected on direction: the choices we might make. Locals and visitors brought together: the warm winter-jaded visitors linked over a meal with those knowing each foot of ground, grown fluid in the wobbling of the earth's rotation, shortening all our days, bringing palm trees and ice forests under the same cut-glass sky, salt etching rock and wall and metal strewn about an epicentre, boundaries of touch and impact, lament and bubbles caught on our face rising up to sight, across the transparent divide of blue fish and white birds, infusion of haze and light rebounding, the swirl of those close and lost already, known even in the shock, thoughts hovering where the body was, is not... and we who know not how

to deal with others lost; so this is all that will come out of iced or burning forests? How do we write: "happy new year" without the sharp cut of water, the burning wash? How celebrate seasons when winter has reached down into the warm, torn shores of an ocean so close, so distant...?